



## Music master Jan Formannoy shares his knowledge with Aruban students

Aruba is fortunate to have the Directory of the Academy of Music of the Maastricht University in Holland on the island for two weeks of workshops at the Cas di Cultura. Jan Formannoy, who began his musical career as a rock guitarist during the music revolution of the sixties, has been working with students of the Aruban Pedagogical Institute, (IPA) the teacher training school of the island, and Rosemary Provence, head of their musical department, since last Saturday, Aug 12.

Mr. Formannoy was brought to the island through a program sponsored by UNOCA and the Fundadion Muchila Creativo, which also is active in bringing workshops to Aruba in Visual Arts, Dance, Theater, Multimedia, and Literature.

Since last Saturday, Mr. Formannoy, who specialized in jazz improvisation, has been conducting classes in the exposition room and he reports that the talent and attitude of his students has been “most encouraging, and a delightful surprise.” Amongst his students could be found noted jazz musician and composer Carlos Bislip.

Jan also confessed during a private interview to being quite enthusiastic and impressed by the music of the island, which he took the time to be acquainted with before arriving. “Many do not realize that the Afro-Caribbean sounds of the region are based on musical rules that are very precise, where a certain rhythm goes with a certain instrument, and a musician better know it. If one wants to play with musicians in Cuba, and you play incorrectly, they will stop you. There are very strict rules to the proper composing and performing of such music. Performers have to dedicate themselves for years to learning it.”

Jan also discussed the challenges of being a music instructor and the many elements of popular music, a subject he will begin teaching to novice guitar players this coming Saturday, August 19. “The Rock Revolution of the Sixties brought a different kind of music, which was very open in its emotion, without the various layers that music had previously, it is completely “out there.” From his experience with rock bands in that era, he found himself drawn to improvisational jazz, which still holds his interest, and is his forte. He finds that the trials and tribulations of the jazz musicians of the thirties and forties and beyond, including musicians such as Miles Davis and Charlie Mingus, helped to create the art form and make it unique. Jazz and Blues are the only true American art form of music, but in its beginning stages was rejected in the U.S., despite being embraced by European music aficionados. In his opinion, real improvisational music began in the U.S., forty years ago, and he tips his hat to what he considers one of the great improvisational musicians of all time, Jimi Hendrix.

Jan also expressed that his goal while on the island is to teach his students how to organize and coach a band successfully. He admits there are challenges in being a music instructor in a time when it would appear that almost everything that can be done musically has been done already, but also loves the creativity and new ground offered by improvisational jazz. “We are still figuring out how to teach this kind of music; how do you teach improvisation, how do you do that?” asks Jan. “How do we challenge creativity? Not only for jazz, but also for classical and all kinds of music. How do we make the present day student feel motivated and engaged? We must find ways for them to develop their talent and give direction to their ideas. This is the challenge. How do we make a school where students do not feel confined? Students need to learn the patterns and the basics, the various disciplines, but they also need to be inspired, to feel creative. They need to take what they have learned, internalize it, and then make it into a personal expression; to incorporate their own vision into producing something original. Until a short time ago we had no schools where one could learn to do this sort of thing, it only came through working with other musicians, and accumulated experience.”

While on the island, aside from the students of IPA, completely novice musicians will have the opportunity to learn guitar from this master instructor. A class in Popular Music will begin at 10 A.M. this coming Saturday for three hours, and will continue on Monday and Tuesday, August 21 and 22. The second and third class is scheduled for after school hours from 3:30 to 6:30 P.M. The cost of the program is a modest 45 Aruban florins for all three sessions combined. Interested parties can sign up at the Cas di Cultura, either at the UNOCA office or in the exposition room where classes are being conducted through the week.